

# Tips for Conducting Market Research

## Step 1: Outline Your Research Objectives

When conducting market research, whether for a project or for a client, the first step is to clearly define your research objectives or the questions you want to answer. For complex research assignments, it may be beneficial to segment your research based on the information you need to find.

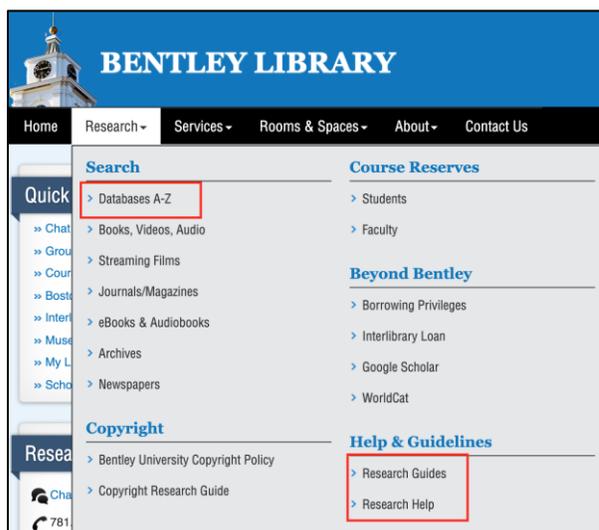
In addition to defining your research goals and outlining your research plan you will need to determine the keywords or phrases that will guide your initial searches. Keywords may change as you delve into your research, but an initial set of keywords is needed to kick off your research.

**Hypothetical Situation:** *Your professor has given you an assignment to uncover how AI is impacting Direct Mailing companies or marketers using direct mail. The objective in this instance is to determine the AI trends impacting direct mail. You break your research apart as follows:*

1. *Primary Research – You determine that you need to talk to Direct Mailing experts to see what Direct Mailers are currently using from a digital perspective*
2. *Secondary Research – You determine that you need to look for articles, papers, and market offerings to get a complete picture of how AI can transform AI*
3. *Potential keywords or phrases: AI, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Direct Mail trends, Direct Marketing, AI impacts on Direct Mail*

## Step 2: Determine Potential Research Sources

In addition to conducting some initial Google searches, the Bentley Library is a great resource for research sources. On the menu bar of the Bentley library page, select the research tab. Within the research drop down menu, Databases A-Z, Research Guides, and Research Help are the sections that will be most helpful.



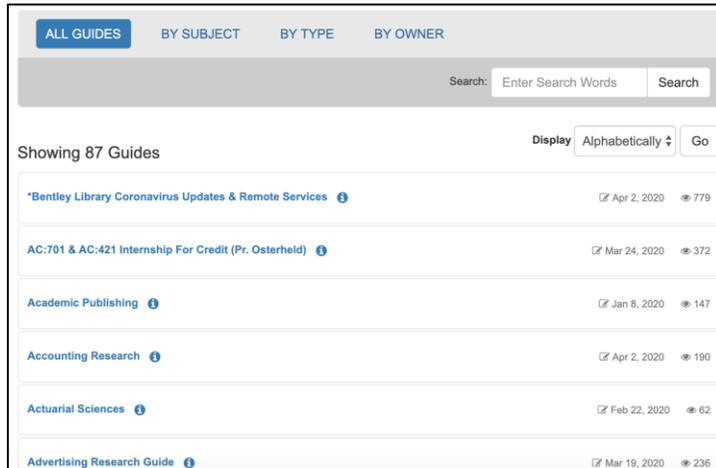
**Databases A-Z:** Bentley University has access to more than 200 databases that cover a wide variety of topics from accounting to agriculture.

**Research Guides:** Bentley's expert team of research librarians has aggregated more than 80 guides on common research topics, as well as class-specific projects.

**Research Help:** If you are totally lost, check out this page to chat with a librarian, determine Bentley's library hours, or to browse featured guides.

### Step 3: Use the Library Research Guides to Jumpstart Your Research

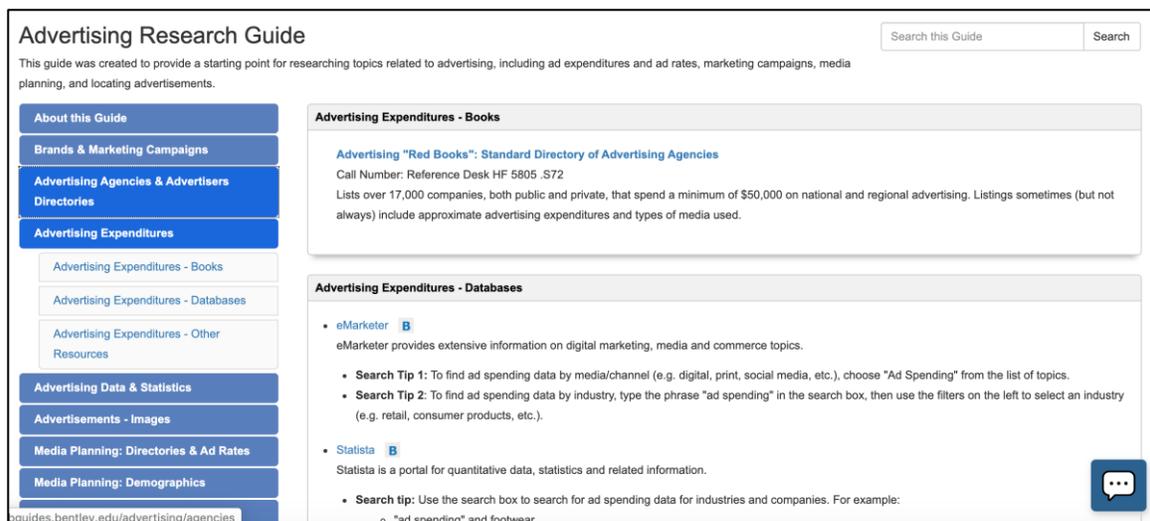
Before deep diving into any research project, first browse Bentley's Research Guide page to determine if there are any guides that will make your research process easier. Within these guides, Bentley Librarians have aggregated sources that may aide you in researching certain topics.



All guides are listed in alphabetical order. However, to make searching for guides easier, it is possible to filter by subject, type, or owner.

If you are unsure of the subject, try entering keyword variations in the search bar.

**Hypothetical Situation:** *You are researching the Future of Media Agencies, so you turn to the Advertising Research Guide to help jumpstart your research. Within this guide, Library staff has aggregates databases, specific works (both publicly available sources and database sources), and search tips to guide your research.*



### Step 4: Use the Bentley's Databases to Unlock Key Research Findings

If there are no ready-made guides to kick off your research, the databases are a great place to start your initial searches. However, with access to over 200 databases sometimes it is difficult to know where to start.

To guide you with your database research, use the drop down menus at the top of the page to narrow down the databases sources that will be most helpful to you!

BENTLEY UNIVERSITY LIBRARY RESEARCH GUIDES

Bentley University Library / LibGuides / A-Z Databases

### A-Z Databases

Find the best library databases for your research.

All Subjects All Database Types All Vendors / Providers Search for Databases Go

All A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z #

209 Databases found

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**Temporary Expanded Access to Online Resources**

Due to the sudden transition for many educational institutions to an online-only format, various vendors and publishers have temporarily expanded access to their online content. We have put

**Hypothetical Situation:** *You have been asked to conduct a competitive analysis on ERP providers for asset-heavy accounting firms. After a quick Google search, it is apparent that all the companies you are trying to research are privately owned. Although each company's website will prove to be valuable sources of information, you determine that additional sources will be needed. What do you do?*

*After clicking on the A-Z database page, turn to the Subject dropdown menu. In this instance, you determine that databases aggregated under the Analyst Opinion, Company Research, Industry Research, and IT & CIS subjects could be good places to find the databases relevant to your project.*

BENTLEY UNIVERSITY LIBRARY RESEARCH GUIDES

Bentley University Library / LibGuides / A-Z Databases

### A-Z Databases

Find the best library databases for your research.

All Subjects All Database Types All Vendors / Providers Search for Databases Go

Subjects

- Accounting (15)
- Analyst Opinion (9)
- Annual Reports & SEC Filings (6)
- Arts, Media, & Literature (37)
- Audiobooks (1)
- Business Ethics (17)
- Business Topics (19)
- Company Research (19)
- Consumers (12)
- Country Research (17)
- Ebooks (14)
- Economics & Finance (30)
- Education (18)
- General Topics (11)
- History (37)
- Industry Research (23)
- International Business (23)
- IT & CIS (14)
- Law & Taxation (8)
- Management (23)

Popular

ORM Global, ABI/INFORM Dateline, and ABI/INFORM Trade and Industry can be found in trade journals, trade news, dissertations, and more. Coverage from 1971-present.

han 200 available in full text. It includes hard-to-find local and regional business information on local markets, and more. Content covers 1982-present and is updated daily. Contains DF formats.

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**Temporary Expanded Access to Online Resources**

Due to the sudden transition for many educational institutions to an online-only format, various vendors and publishers have temporarily expanded access to their online content. We have put together a list of some of the resources we have learned are offering this access on our Bentley Library Coronavirus Updates & Remote Services page.

If you are looking for an electronic version of your course textbook please check with your professor to see if they have already arranged access. You can also use the special e-book access link on the Bentley University Bookstore's website to search for your textbook: <https://bentley.bnccollege.com/shop/bentley/home>.

**Pro Tip:** When conducting research on a niche subject or a topic / industry that is unfamiliar to you try to familiarize yourself with the industry. To do this, determine the NAICS code that is most relevant to the industry or companies you are researching.

Many databases have advanced search features that will allow you to search for content by NAICs code.

Also, IBIS World is a GREAT research source to help familiarize you with an industry.

### **Step 5: Using the World Wide Web to Expand Your Searches**

After scouring Bentley's databases, use publically available resources to enrich your research. Beyond looking for online articles, think about the following research sources:

- **Social Media:** Social Media can be a great tool for finding primary research sources/experts, hard-to-find articles, or conducting competitive analysis, etc.
  - **YouTube:** Video-sharing site, YouTube, can be a great place to find long-form video content from publishers, journalists, or subject enthusiasts.
  - **LinkedIn:** Use LinkedIn's advance search features for conducting company specific research or finding subject matter experts to interview. Join industry groups to ask questions or search for highly specialized information.
  - **Twitter:** Use Twitter to contact subject matter experts or thought leaders or to find articles/content that may be difficult to locate on Google
  - **Facebook:** Joining Facebook Groups can be a great way to find individuals who are passionate about a niche subject or to see how brands are interacting with their customers / building community.
- **News Outlets:** News outlets such as the New York Times, Bloomberg, Wall Street Journal, Forbes, and etc. can provide helpful research. Not only does the Bentley Library provide access to some of these sources, but cafes like Starbucks provide free access, too.
- **Trade Magazines, Publications, and Journals:** Industry or trade magazines are wonderful research resources. Although some sources or content are locked behind pay walls, there are many free resources that researchers can access. Unsure of what trade magazines will be helpful to your search? Try a simple search "[INSERT SUBJECT] trade magazine."
- **Government Websites:** There are countless government websites, such as the [US Census](#) or [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), that contain a wealth of information that can enrich or aid research projects
- **Company Websites, Consumer Reviews, & White Pages:** Company websites and review sites can be great sources for conducting research. Many companies who try position themselves as thought-leaders will write research reports or whitepapers on certain topics. Although these resources can include marketing language aimed at driving sales, these sources are often valuable sources for niche research projects.

**Pro Tip:** When using research found on the web, it is important to consider whether the source of that information is credible or biased. Try to think critically and read between the lines, particularly when "marketing language" is used.

**Step 6: Conducting Primary Research**

Still having trouble finding what you need? Consider conducting primary research such as One-on-One interviews, Focus Groups, and online surveys. Refer to the CMT Focus Group and Qualtrics Guide for tips on these primary research methods.

**Step 7: Reaching Out for Help**

It can be difficult to conduct research on niche topics, but reaching out to research resources can help. At Bentley, Professors, Research Librarians, and CMT staff are great resources that can help guide you in the right direction.

The Research Librarians can be reached through instant messages, email, zoom meetings, as well as in-person drop-ins. Please check the library website for specific hours.

CMT staff available for in-person, Zoom, and email assistance Monday-Friday between 8:30 AM-6:30 PM. The CMT staff is a particularly great resource for help in scheduling, conducting, and analysis primary research.